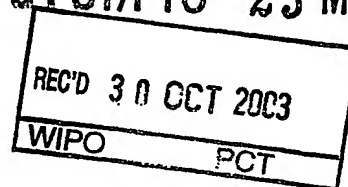


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PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Invention Title: High speed electric motor power supply

The invention is described in the following statement:

HIGH SPEED ELECTRIC MOTOR POWER SUPPLY

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a power supply for a high speed electric motor and relates particularly to a power supply for a motor using magnetic bearings.

- 5 International Patent Application No WO 98/33260 describes a high speed electric motor which is particularly suitable for use as a refrigeration compressor motor. Such a motor may be used in, for example, a compressor of the type described in Australian Patent No 686174 and utilizing magnetic bearings for the suspension of rotating parts.

10 Background of the Invention

- A known difficulty with the use of magnetic bearings is to supply power to the bearings during a system power failure, during which the power supply to the motor fails. While it is known to use auxiliary or back-up power supplies to the system, such as by way of batteries or the like, such auxiliary power supplies are
15 relatively expensive and require additional switching controls to enable the auxiliary supply to take over when the main power supply fails. Further, the batteries have a limited life and generally must be replaced every two (2) years. This adds substantial further costs to the system.

- It is therefore desirable to provide an improved power supply system for a
20 high speed electric motor running in magnetic bearings which can maintain power to the bearings in the event of a main power supply failure.

It is also desirable to provide a power supply system for continuously supplying power to the magnetic bearings of a high speed electric motor following a failure of the main power supply until such time as the rotating parts are at rest.

- 25 It is also desirable to provide an improved controller for a high speed electric motor which enables a spinning rotor to spin down under controlled conditions.

- It is also desirable to provide a power supply controller for a high speed electric motor with magnetic bearings which is relatively inexpensive, which is
30 efficient in its operation and which provides a substantially fail-safe power supply

for the magnetic bearings.

Summary of the Invention

In accordance with one aspect of the invention there is provided a power control system for an electric motor having at least one magnetic bearing, said
5 system comprising a DC/DC converter supplied from a DC link buss connected to a main power supply, said buss supplying power for the electric motor and for a bearing actuator, said converter providing low voltage DC power supplies for a motor controller, a bearing controller and a supervisory controller, the supervisory
10 controller monitoring the main power supply and communicating with the motor controller and bearing controller so as to cause the motor to operate as a generator in the event of a failure of the main power supply to thereby supply power to the DC link buss to maintain operation of the magnetic bearing characterised in that, circuit switching components are connected to the motor
15 winding and selectively switched in a manner causing current generated in the motor winding to flow in one direction into said DC link buss only while the winding voltage is greater than that of the DC link buss.

The invention is preferably adapted for use with a high speed electric motor, the rotor of which is supported solely by magnetic bearings. The invention may also be utilised for an electric motor having a combination of magnetic and gas
20 bearings.

Preferably, the DC link buss incorporates at least one capacitor, which, in normal use, is maintained in a charged condition by the main power supply. The capacitor is able to provide sufficient power in conjunction with that supplied by the motor running as a generator to run down the motor from full speed and maintain
25 operation of the magnetic bearings during the run down period. Running the motor as a generator during the run down period extracts the kinetic energy stored in the motor and other rotating parts and constitutes an electric brake to quickly and safely stop the rotor rotation. During the run down period, power continues to be supplied from the motor, running as a generator, to the DC link
30 buss which provides an uninterruptable power supply to the DC/DC converter and the several controllers as well as the magnetic bearing actuator for the full run down period.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention there is provided a method of running down a high speed DC electric motor run on magnetic bearings in the event of a failure of the main power supply, said method including the steps of supplying the motor and the magnetic bearings from a high voltage DC buss connected to the main power supply, providing a DC/DC converter to supply low voltage DC power to a magnetic bearing controller and to a motor controller, using switching devices to control the motor operation, sensing a failure of said main power supply and providing a signal to the motor controller, characterized in that, said switching devices are selectively controlled on sensing said failure, to initially feed existing motor current to said buss, detecting when said buss voltage drops below a predetermined value and shorting said motor winding, and as soon as current flow in said winding commences, as a result of the short, removing said short whereby the winding voltage rises to above the buss voltage, feeding the resulting generated current back to said buss, and repeating said selective control as necessary until said motor is run down.

According to one embodiment of the invention the power control system incorporates a plurality of switches operable to switch power between the two polarities of the DC buss and each end of the motor winding to switch the current flow through the winding. Each switch has a diode in parallel. When a mains power failure is sensed, such as by measuring a voltage drop across the buss, the switches are all switched to the "off" position and current existing in the motor coil is fed to the buss. As soon as the buss voltage drops again, the motor winding is shorted by closing the appropriate switches and then opened to let the current, generated by shorting the winding, be pumped back into the buss through the diodes.

This control method uses the existing motor control IGBT switches to realise the generator function of the motor when the buss voltage falls. With this control system, there is no need to track the rotor position and control switching as a function of rotor position. The diodes enable the motor to act as a generator with all switches in the open position and the current being pumped into the buss to assist the installed capacitor for maintaining the buss voltage until the motor is run down.

One embodiment of the invention will now be described with reference to

the accompanying drawing wherein:

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a power control system in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a schematic circuit diagram illustrating the control switches for a single phase motor and

Figure 3 is a flow chart of the control algorithm of the system shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Description of one embodiment

Referring to the drawings and firstly Figure 1, the power control system 12 is connected to a three phase AC power supply 14 through a bridge rectifier 16. A DC link buss 17 supplies DC power to a DC/DC converter 18, magnetic bearing actuator 19 and electric motor power supply 21. A large capacitor 22 or capacitor bank is connected across the link buss 17 to provide a buffer of stored power for motor run down. In this embodiment, the DC link buss voltage is 1000V and the capacitor, or several capacitors, will have a capacity sufficient for a motor run down time of about 0.1 sec to about 1.5 sec, in the absence of any other power source.

The DC/DC converter 18 provides low voltage DC power for a motor controller 23, a bearing controller 24 and a supervisory controller, which, in this embodiment, takes the form of a computer 26. The converter 18 also supplies low voltage power for various sensors associated with the magnetic bearings and for Insulated Gate Bipolar Transistors (IGBT) (not shown) which are used for control purposes in the magnetic bearing actuator 19 and the electric motor power supply 21. The magnetic bearing actuator 19 and associated IGBTs and the electric motor power supply 21 and its associated IGBTs are known in the art and will not be described in detail. Gate drive signals for the various IGBTs are generated by the bearing controller 24 and motor controller 23, respectively, to provide the desired operational parameters for the electric motor and the electric motor bearings.

An AC power monitor 27 provides a signal to the supervisory computer 26 in the event of a failure of the main AC power supply 14. Alternatively, the

supervisory computer 26 may monitor the buss voltage, through the DC/DC converter 18, to detect a power failure which results in a voltage drop across the capacitor 22. On detection of a power failure, the motor controller 23 controls the IGBTs to feed existing motor current to the DC link buss and to then open
5 whereby motor winding current reverses relative to the motor magnetic field thereby turning the electric motor into a generator.

Referring to Figure 2, the IGBT switches 28, which are controlled by the motor controller 23, connect motor winding 29 to the DC buss 17 in accordance with the rotor position. While four switches 28 are shown in Figure 2, in a three
10 phase motor structure, six switches 28 will be provided.

Each switch 28 has a parallel diode 31 the polarity of which opposes the motor current flow. When a power failure is detected either by power monitor 27 or by detecting a voltage drop across the capacitor 22, all switches are turned off, or opened, and existing current in the motor winding 29 flows through the relevant
15 diodes 31 to the buss 17. This provides an immediate boost to the buss voltage, and as soon as the buss voltage again drops, two switches SW1 and SW3 or SW2 and SW4 are closed to short circuit the motor winding 29 and immediately initiate flow of current therethrough. As soon as the current flow commences as a result of the short, the switches are again turned off whereby the winding voltage rises to
20 above the buss voltage and generated current is pumped back to the capacitor 22.

With this arrangement, it is not necessary for the control system to know the voltage inside the motor winding 29 or the relative position of the rotor. The generated current in the motor winding 29 can only go in one direction through the diodes 31 into the DC buss and only while the winding voltage is greater than that
25 of the DC buss 17.

It will be seen that, when a power failure is detected, the switches are actuated, under control of the motor controller 23, to ensure that the motor runs as a generator for the time of the power failure or until motor rundown.

The power developed by the motor/generator 21 is fed into the DC link buss
30 17 to maintain the power supply for the magnetic bearings 18. By drawing power from the motor 21, the rotor is electrically braked thereby taking potentially hazardous kinetic energy away from the rotor shaft. The power generated during

the run down together with the power stored in the capacitor 22 maintains the power supply to the magnetic bearings 18 and the controllers 23 and 24 for sufficient time to enable the motor 21 and associated rotating parts to run down to a stop.

5 Figure 3 shows the control algorithm of a program of the supervisory controller 26 of the system of Figures 1 and 2. The program commences at box 32 ("power failure detected") where the power failure is detected either by power monitor 27 or by detecting a voltage drop across the capacitor 22. At this point the switches 28 are open and the motor acts as a generator (generator mode box 33) and existing current in motor winding 29 flows to the buss 17 through relevant diodes 31. Program box 34 involves controlling the switches 28 (IGBT's) to feed current back to the buss 17 and boost buss voltage. The switches 28 are opened when this current reversal occurs (box 35). As soon as the buss voltage again drops switches SW1 and SW3 or SW2 and SW4 are closed (box 36) to short
10 circuit the motor winding 29. If the winding current is "higher than a pre-set value" (box 37) the program moves to the exit box 40. If the winding current is not higher than the pre-set value the program moves to box 38 which causes switches SW1 and SW3 or SW2 and SW4 (whichever pair was previously turned on) to open. The next decision point is box 39 where the voltage rise across the buss is
15 monitored and if the voltage rises above a pre-set value the program is then exited via box 40. If the voltage rise is less than the pre-set value the program reverts to box 36 and repeats the procedure.

In one particular form of the invention, when the electric motor is used to drive a refrigeration compressor, the supervisory computer, on sensing a power
20 failure, will also operate to unload the compressor.

Subject to the motor speed, the inertia of the rotating parts associated with the motor and any external load on the motor, a run down time of between 2 to 3 seconds is achievable. By operating the motor 21 as a generator and supplying power to the DC link buss 17, the charge in the capacitor 22 is able to be
30 maintained for all of the run down time. By maintaining a power supply to the magnetic bearings during run down, damage to the bearings is avoided and the motor is able to be safely brought to rest.

CLAIMS

1. A power control system for an electric motor having at least one magnetic bearing, said system comprising a DC/DC converter supplied from a DC link buss connected to a main power supply, said buss supplying power for the electric motor and for a bearing actuator, said converter providing low voltage DC power supplies for a motor controller, a bearing controller and a supervisory controller, the supervisory controller monitoring the main power supply and communicating with the motor controller and bearing controller so as to cause the motor to operate as a generator in the event of a failure of the main power supply to thereby supply power to the DC link buss to maintain operation of the magnetic bearing characterised in that, circuit switching components are connected to the motor winding and selectively switched in a manner causing current generated in the motor winding to flow in one direction into said DC link buss only while the winding voltage is greater than that of the DC link buss.
2. A power control system as defined in claim 2, characterised in that, said circuit switching components comprise first and second switches connected between a first end of the motor winding and the positive and negative sides of said DC link bus, respectively, and third and fourth switches connected between a second end of the motor winding and the positive and negative sides of said DC link bus, respectively, and a parallel diode connected across each switch to oppose the normal motor current flow.
3. A power control system as defined in claim 2, characterized in that, either said first and third or second and fourth switches are turned on to generate said current in said motor winding and immediately said current is generated said switches are turned off whereby the winding voltage rises above said buss voltage and said current flows into said DC link buss.
4. A power control system as defined in claim 3, characterised in that, said switches are IGBT's which are opened when a power failure is detected such that existing motor current flows through relevant said diodes and into said DC link buss to boost the buss voltage, and when said buss voltage again drops either said first and third, or said second and fourth switches are closed to short circuit said motor winding and immediately initiate current flow therethrough, whereupon

said switches are opened causing the winding voltage to rise above the buss voltage and the generated current is fed back to said link buss.

5 5. A power control system as defined in claim 4, characterised in that, a capacitor is connected between the positive and negative sides of said link bus to store power fed back from said winding for motor run down.

10 6. A method of running down a high speed DC electric motor run on magnetic bearings in the event of a failure of the main power supply, said method including the steps of supplying the motor and the magnetic bearings from a high voltage DC buss connected to the main power supply, providing a DC/DC
15 converter to supply low voltage DC power to a magnetic bearing controller and to a motor controller, using switching devices to control the motor operation, sensing a failure of said main power supply and providing a signal to the motor controller, characterized in that, said switching devices are selectively controlled on sensing said failure, to initially feed existing motor current to said buss, detecting when
20 said buss voltage drops below a predetermined value and shorting said motor winding, and as soon as current flow in said winding commences, as a result of the short, removing said short whereby the winding voltage rises to above the buss voltage, feeding the resulting generated current back to said buss, and repeating said selective control as necessary until said motor is run down.

20 7. A method according to claim 6, characterized in that, a capacitor is provided across said buss to provide a buffer of stored power for said motor run down.

25 8. A method according to claim 6, characterized in that said step of detecting when said buss voltage drops below a predetermined value is achieved by detecting a reversal of the current being fed to said buss.

30 9. A method according to claim 7, characterized in that, said switching devices comprise IGBT switches connected between each end of the motor winding and the positive and negative side of said buss respectively, and a diode connected in parallel with each switch, said diodes enabling said motor to act as a generator and feed current into said buss to assist said capacitor in maintaining the buss voltage until said motor is run down.

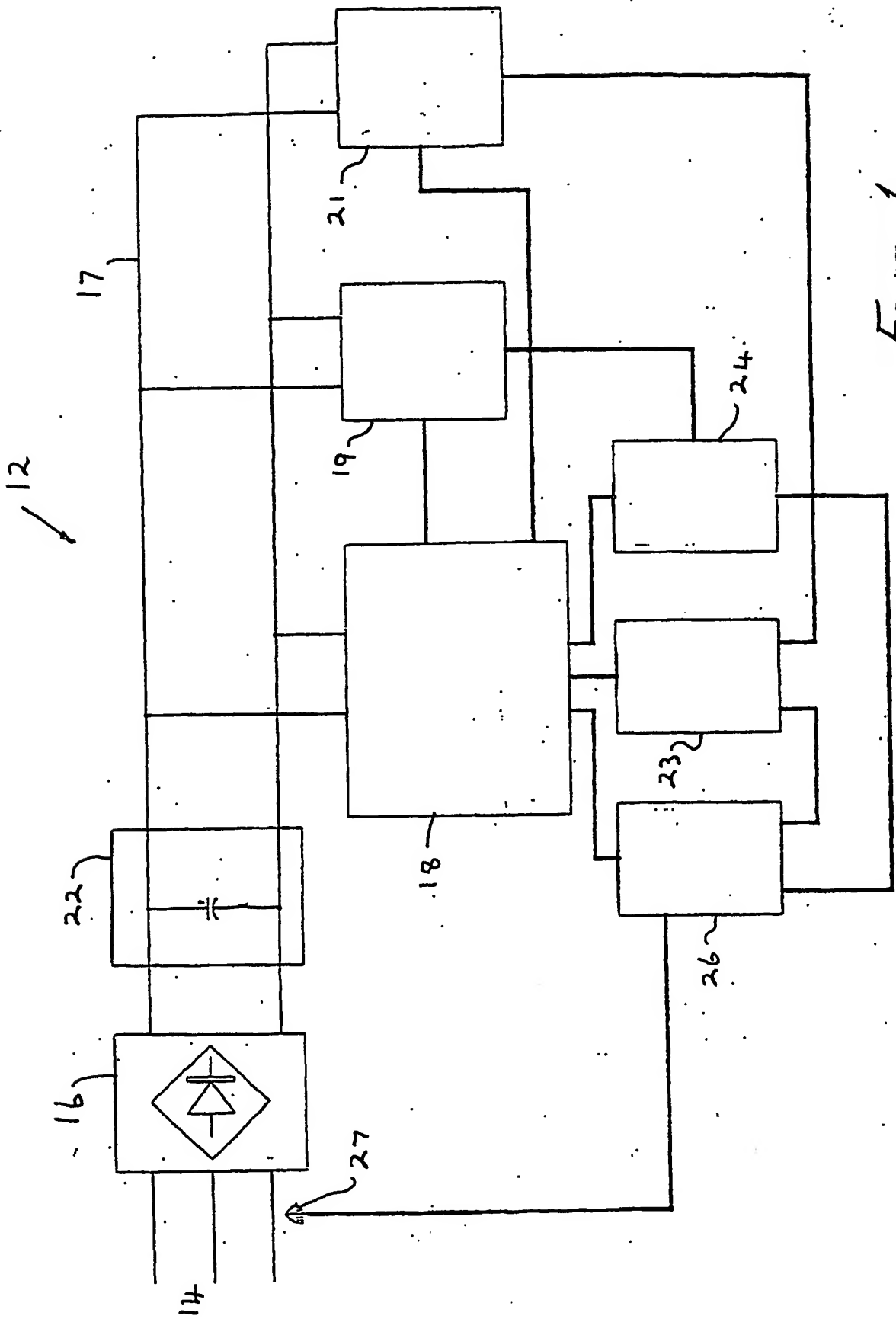


FIG 1

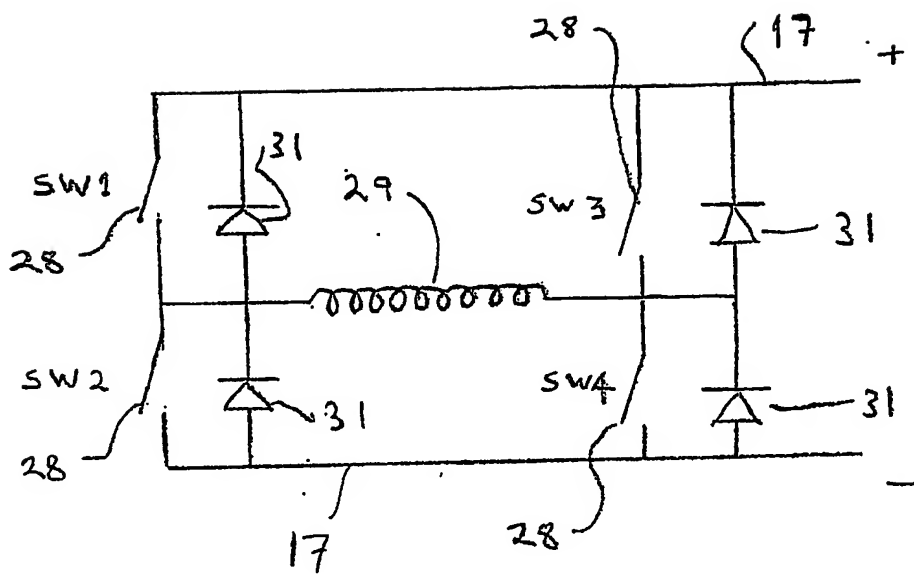


FIG 2

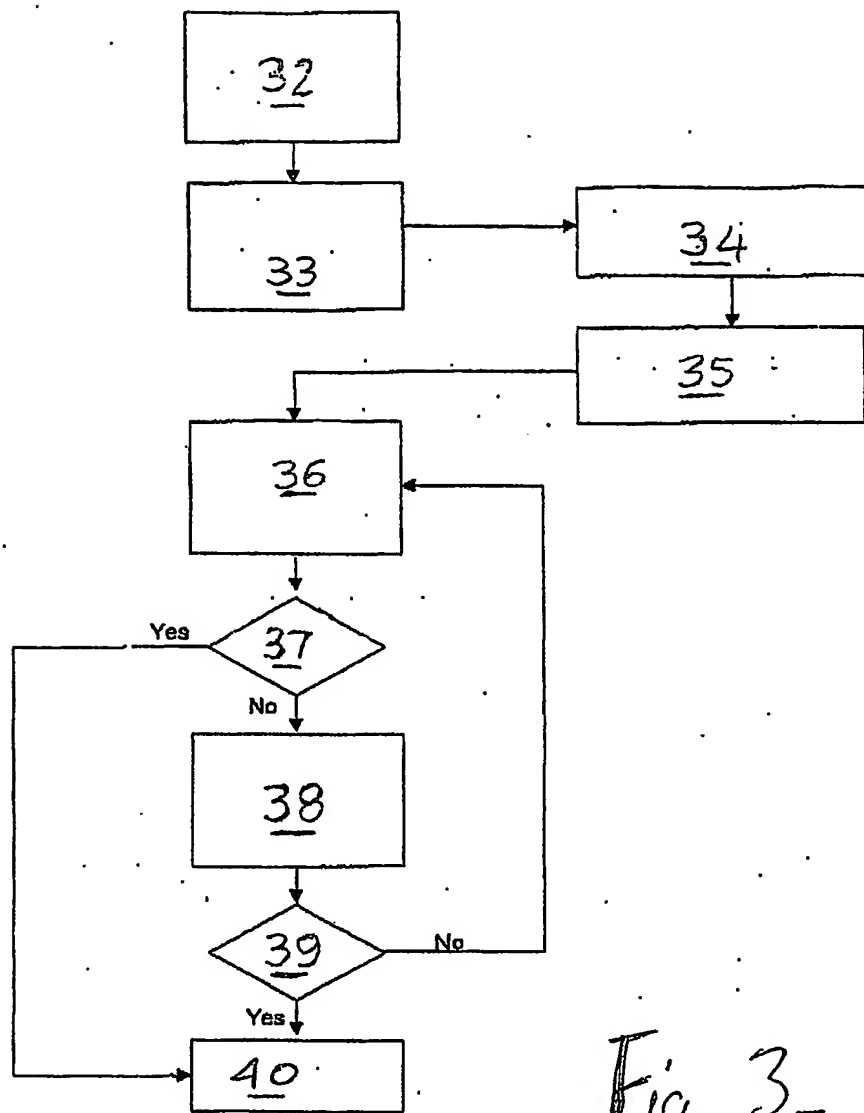


Fig-3-

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